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GUIDELINES--SOME AGREEMENTS ABOUT THE TEACHING-LEARNING OF MODERN LANGUAGES.

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A STUDY GROUP OF ADMINISTRATORS, SUPERVISORS, AND TEACHERS FROM OHIO PUBLIC SCHOOLS COOPERATED WITH STAFF FROM THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION OF THE STATE UNIVERSITY IN DEVELOPING THIS BULLETIN ABOUT GOOD PRACTICES IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES. THE DOCUMENT DESCRIBES, IN GENERAL TERMS, THE FEATURES OF A WELL-PLANNED, ARTICULATED AUDIOLINGUAL LANGUAGE PROGRAM AS A PART OF GENERAL EDUCATION. THE FOCUS IS ON SUCH ELEMENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EFFECTIVE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CURRICULUM AS SCHEDULING, LEARNING LEVELS, TEACHING GUIDELINES, TEACHER PREPARATION, AND THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE COORDINATOR. A DISCUSSION OF THE LANGUAGE LABORATORY INCLUDES INFORMATION ABOUT THE PLANNING, PRODUCTION, AND USE OF REINFORCEMENT AND TESTING TAPES. REFERENCE IS MADE ALSO TO THE USE OF TELEVISION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS. (AB)

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GUIDELINES: SOME AGREEMENTS ABOUT THE TEACHING-LEARNING OF MODERN LANGUAGES

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This bulletin represents the present thinking of a modern language study group in Ohio. We feel communication to be an important part of any such venture, not only within the participating group, but also outward to a wider audience of interested people. Because of our inadequacy in knowing who the latter might be, we hope that you will be able to find appropriate use for it, either for your own information or for someone else in your school district or professional circle. (More copies of it are available through the School of Education, The Ohio State University.) Since our concerns are always on-going, we welcome any reactions or comments you may have.

FOREWORD

In 1960, at the invitation of Dr. Alexander Frazier, Director of The Center for School Experimentation, a study group of administrators, supervisors and teachers from public schools was formed for the purpose of identifying and clarifying common problems in the modern language area, discussing them, and perhaps finding some answers. The school systems represented were those of Bexley, Canton, Cincinnati, Columbus, Findlay, Grandview Heights, Kettering, Middletown, Newark, Ottowa Hills, Sandusky and Worthington, as well as the College of Education of The Ohio State University. Although the original plan was designed for a three-year study, most of the participants are continuing to meet on a yearly basis.

The informality of the conferences and the feeling of freedom to speak without sounding inadequate led to our establishing an extremely valuable exchange of ideas. Our common efforts enabled us to reach some basic understandings about good practices in the teaching and learning of modern languages. This bulletin is an expression of these understandings.

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INTRODUCTION

If an expert were asked how much time it takes to learn a language, he might well respond, "Forever". A thoughtful person is constantly refining and enlarging his linguistic understandings. Whether it be his native language or another, each learner must develop his own way of "internalizing" (organizing for automatic usage) the components of that language.

If we want foreign languages to be a part of general education, we must allow the average learner enough time to become accustomed to the sound patterns and the structural framework of the language he is studying.

AMOUNT OF CLASS TIME

Because we do not know how much time it takes to "learn a language", any decision about amount of time must be an arbitrary one, based on what we know about how the learning takes place and on scheduling factors. Also to be considered are purposes and goals, both of which must be appropriate to the age level of the class.

In the elementary school and in seventh and eighth grades, where the practice needs to be frequent but of rather short duration, the most effective and desirable scheduling seems to be twenty to thirty minutes, five times per week. Beginning or continuing classes in the seventh and eighth grades fall within the same general framework of time as the elementary school. A forty-five to fifty-five minute period, five days per week is

desirable for classes nine through twelve. However, if the foreign language learning is begun early enough, the later courses (i.e., eleventh and twelfth grades) may become the seminar type, meeting two or three times per week.

BEST AGE TO BEGIN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

There is disagreement, even among the experts, upon the ideal grade for a child to begin learning a foreign language, although we do know that the family really provides the best learning situation. From a practical point of view, therefore, each school system must assess its own problems in terms of present schedule, teacher availability, staff agreement on aims and goals, and guarantee of meaningful continuity. The tragedy of the many discontinued FLES programs testifies to the need for caution. Establishing a FLES or a junior high program will prove meaningless in terms of developing language skills and understandings if the pupils cannot continue to extend and deepen their language experience. Therefore, a strong program of courses should already be established in secondary school. This may mean a four, five or six year sequence in which the teachers are skilled in the audio-lingual structural approach and are stressing oral skills. This already-established program should be based on maximum communication among staff members in terms of planning, evaluating and continuity which can envelop the FLES and junior high

programs too. It seems preferable that the move into a FLES or junior high program be done slowly, from grade to grade downward rather than first down to a low level and then upward.

However, what should be done about the already-established elementary or junior high program which seems to be unsuccessful? First of all, don't abandon it. Each year, we have a sharper perspective of a "total language experience", and we can define more clearly the values of early foreign language experiences. Now, when such programs are at the crossroads, is the time to support and strengthen them with such measures as:

1. involving teachers, administrators and experts in creating, within the framework of the school system, meaningful changes in the FLES or junior high program.
2. providing continuing expert leadership and support for teachers involved in the program.
3. providing for the community to be consistently and continuously informed as to values, goals and purposes of the program.

This enormous problem of articulation has many pitfalls, and parent expectations -- often based on "not being informed" about the goals and purposes of the program -- are usually somewhat less than realistic.

MATERIALS

Materials and choice of content are still very controversial topics. The persons most affected -- the teachers -- must be informed about all new materials and be encouraged to develop, slowly if need be, their own styles of procedure. They must continually ask themselves what is meaningful and usable in the learning of a modern language. Every language has a relatively small core of structures, of which there are, of course, infinite variations and combinations. It is important to identify this core in the target language and to establish a beginning sequence of learning which minimizes the complexities of language.

The selection of the material should be concerned with several goals, one of which is to provide the pupil in the elementary course sequence (four to five years in a FLES program or two to three years in secondary school) with a basic active knowledge of the language. This sequence should include all of the structures most commonly used in the spoken language and the vocabulary of the highest frequency in the spoken language. In addition, content which has a close relationship to the pupil's interest and environment should have a high priority. At the end of the basic sequence, the pupil should be able to discuss in the foreign language many of the things dealing with his environment, the sort of discussions which occur frequently in halls, in other classes and out of school.

The teacher needs to be informed about and in agreement with the long range objectives of the school's foreign language program; this is essential for good articulation and continuous evaluation. Specific guidelines and over-all frame works should be available to him at each level of teaching so that he may be "freed" to teach.

In these guides for the teacher, there should be included the minimal outcomes desired so that the teacher may readily judge when and/or whether mastery of a particular structure or pattern has been attained. In evaluating the level of mastery, the teacher should have means of determining and distinguishing between active and passive knowledge or understanding. There should be specific suggestions about handling the degree of English interference with, or reinforcement of, foreign language structures. Good materials, therefore, are highly structured and would provide for the teacher (either in guideline form or within the content) means of continuous review and evaluation consistent with good learning principles, in addition to plentiful audio-visual aids.

However, one cannot discuss materials without being confronted by the intolerable situation in which teachers find themselves because of public expectations. It is assumed that the teacher should use up-to-date methods in his classes. This may involve a set of

skills completely different from those he has been using, so that his security seems threatened and his confidence undermined. He may be forced to work with a laboratory. Sometimes he is unwilling to assume the responsibility, and often is ineffective because he does not have proper material. Having been informed about the advances in the area of linguistics and its effect upon the teaching of languages, the public is unaware of the many problems, and thus needs urgently to be informed about the goals and expected results.

It is significant to note that pupil interest and motivation generally remain higher in an audio-lingual approach, and the teacher sees results which are not measured by such tests as the *Ohio Scholarship Test and* the Every Pupil Test. Therefore, the pupils of the teachers who are sincerely vesting their efforts in the audio-lingual (oral-aural) approach are being penalized by lower scores on these antiquated tests. While many new kinds of tests are still in the making, there are some available for which norms have already been established. These, prepared by the Modern Language Association, are composed of four separate units: listening, speaking, reading, writing. Each student may be tested in any one skill or in all four of them. These tests may also be used to determine the skills proficiency of prospective teachers. However, we do not yet have a

proper tool for the measurement of attitude development or of readiness in learners of any age.

After World War II, the proven inadequacy of the grammar translation method panicked the nation into action. But, the nature of the audio-lingual method has not yet been clarified and it continues, in the public mind, to be judged by grammar translation standards because they are so tangible. The spirit of the audio-lingual must not be stifled by such lack of communication. It is important for supervisors, administrators and teachers to understand that even though foreign language teachers in any one system are highly competent, there may be disagreement among them as to procedures and content. Even if there is no actual disagreement, they may lack meaninful continuity and concerted emphases. Experts in methods and materials can be used as resources if there seems to be a need for clarification and/or program development. Administrations must reach realistic agreements with the teachers of foreign languages about the approximate number and sequence of structures to cover in a given amount of time; parents must be helped to understand the nature of second language learning; students must be able to see immediate and long-range goals.

TEACHER PREPARATION

A sobering thought, when one is considering the increased programs in foreign language, is that there

will still be a scarcity of trained teachers even though there is an ever-increasing number of foreign language majors in education. In addition, there is in Ohio a lack of adequate courses specifically designed for practical application in methods of teaching foreign languages; very often there must be retraining of new graduates either in NDEA Summer Institutes or on-the-job apprenticeship. We must further strengthen our forces by providing sensitive and expert help for those teachers who are insecure in adapting to aural-oral procedures and who are often unable to attend institutes or get further training. We must not be satisfied with measuring by thirty-year-old standards, nor can we allow our teachers to fail in the new science of language teaching because of apathy or ignorance or lack of active support.

In the FLES programs, the ideal is the elementary classroom teacher who has had training in a foreign language. For them, NDEA Summer Institutes are highly effective. In-service training and/or exchanges among school systems can add to teachers' professional preparation. An effective coordinator can both simplify and expedite progress.

In a larger school system, a coordinator is necessary. His duties are to provide the means for a unified, resourceful, well-balanced, effective program by:

1. Establishing goals and objectives, short-term and long-range.
2. Providing curriculum guides for each level.
3. Gathering aids and materials, for both classroom and laboratory, available to any teacher.
4. Arranging for teacher meetings, workshops, exchanges, visitations, and demonstrations. (All of these should allow for discussion of common concerns both of the classroom and the laboratory.)
5. Evaluating ways of testing; interpreting results of testing.
6. Experimenting with and making appropriate adaptations of innovations such as team teaching and apprentice teachers.
7. Interviewing prospective teachers for the purpose of measuring their language skills and attitudes.
8. Interpreting to parents both the program and its results.

Other kinds of aids must be investigated: we need to evaluate the use of television or films for teachers, to show techniques and methods in specific languages. Team teaching and/or apprenticeships could be highly effective, especially in large school systems.

At this point it seems evident that teacher preparation should include training in such areas as:

1. Methods in foreign languages.

2. Applied linguistics.
3. Psychology: the nature of learning and how children develop.
4. The nature of language.
5. Special foreign language training (oral).
6. Laboratory courses.
7. Phonetics (the new concept).

It is obvious that each teacher must be encouraged and assisted to seek greater effectiveness in the audio-lingual approach in both the classroom and in the laboratory; he must not be afraid to experiment a little or make mistakes in order to keep refining his individual teaching strengths. Above all, however, he must be patient with himself, realizing that <u>neither quickly nor easily</u> will he arrive at the effective teaching performance of his aspirations.

THE LANGUAGE LABORATORY

There are now several good references on language laboratories including the latest government bulletin:

LANGUAGE LABORATORY FACILITIES, by Alfred S. Hayes
OE - 21024, Bulletin 1963, No. 37
United States Government Printing Office
Washington 25, D.C. (50¢)

Most experts agree that the laboratory is not to be used for <u>teaching</u>, but rather for reinforcing, reviewing and testing. Commercial tapes often do not fill the specific need of the teacher and he must prepare his own tapes. For this, he needs time, help, and convenient, available equipment. Sound-proofed rooms for recording are highly

desirable, and new building plans should include such facilities, as well as a laboratory which is central to -- and not far from -- the foreign language classrooms. In the appraisal of any laboratory, the values of these facilities are negated unless they are kept open and available for any class, during the day.

Both from the psychological and mechanical point of view, in-service training at the time of the installation of a laboratory should be mandatory.

The following basic principles indicate what constitutes a good tape.

I. Structure:

1. The objective of the exercise must be clear in the mind of the teacher preparing the exercise.
2. The objective of the exercise must be made clear to the student:
   a. Instructions should be stated simply and to the point;
   b. Instructions should contain an example of the expected student response;
   c. Instructions should preferably be given in English.
3. The exercise should present one problem at a time.
4. Wherever feasible, the problem should be graded in difficulty.

5. The student should at all times be aware of the beginning and the end of each exercise.
6. Wherever an oral response is elicited, the student must have a chance to hear the correct response.
7. The pace of the exercise should be lively and should approximate natural performance.
8. The pauses for student response should be adequate, but not too long.
9. It is desirable that a given exercise not exceed ten minutes.
10. A high degree of student participation must be assured in the structure of the exercise.

II. Material

1. The material must be an integral part of subject matter previously covered in class.
2. The material used in the exercise should be:
   a. Natural
   b. Meaningful
   c. Interesting
   d. Challenging

III. Recording:

1. The speaker's voice should be pleasant, natural and enthusiastic.
2. His diction should be precise.
3. His presentation should be rich in tone qualities.
4. A uniform tonevolume should be maintained throughout.

IV. What Not To Do:

1. Avoid taxing the student's memory.
2. a. Avoid long sentences that the student cannot remember.
   b. Avoid non-essential details in narratives.
3. Avoid confusing and frustrating by:
   a. Rambling directions.
   b. Unclear objectives.
   c. A multiplicity of objectives.
   d. A re-presentation of grammatical principles.
   e. Presentation of directions in the foreign language to students beyond their ability to understand.
4. Avoid monotony in material and manner of presentation.
5. Avoid overtaxing the student's concentration span.
6. Avoid utilizing unfamiliar material, except for certain exercises of listening comprehension.

The phase of testing may include:

I. Aural Comprehension: listening to statements or questions and identifying
   a. The pictures described:

b. The correct answer as yes or no;

c. The correct sound through auditory discrimination.

II. Reading Comprehension: listening to statements or questions, and checking among printed multiple choice answers

a. The correct completion of a statement.

b. The correct answer to a question.

III. Recording, if this facility is available: through

a. Answering questions.

b. Describing pictures.

Each staff must decide, in terms of its own problems, the schedule of time to be spent in the laboratory. It must consider the age of the class group, the state of their language development, the demands for the use of the laboratory and the type of activity planned. Optimum conditions for beginning classes would be ten to twenty minutes daily. More advanced classes would spend less time in all, but longer periods at one sitting.

Cautions to be heeded are:

1. The need to save some of the money for tapes and materials when the purchase of a lab is being considered.
2. The need for coordination in the use of the lab.
3. The need for specified service on (upkeep of) equipment.

EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION

As enthusiasm for learning foreign languages continued to mount, and teachers remained scarce and often unqualified, television seemed to offer intriguing possibilities for a solution to the problem. Since success in this medium must, in all fairness, be measured in relative terms, one could conclude that factors of comparison may not in reality be comparable and that "the best of all possible" presentations may not yet have been created.

There is no doubt that students with language aptitude, motivation and interest can learn in spite of the means and the method. However, our goal is to create the best possible situation for learning for everyone.

There are several factors inherent in foreign language instruction through television which present concerns:

1. The elementary classroom teacher is often caught in an unfamiliar area, sometimes with no interest in it but faced with the problem of relating to it the child's total day.
2. It is essential that an introduction follow-up be carefully planned by a qualified, enthusiastic, interested teacher, or the teacher-pupil interaction in the learning process may either be lost completely or altered unnaturally.
3. It is difficult to create materials which, as a teaching program on television, can continue to

serve the needs of thousands of children at the same time. There must be some provision for individual differences and pupil readiness.

Further suitable use of television might involve programs as supplementary or adjunct to the regular classroom work, or as an aid to teachers in the dissemination of new techniques, new developments and other aspects of professional preparation. It should be added that films, and film strips, with much the same context, can be used more flexibly, paced to the readiness and moods of groups as well as to individual needs.